



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## STATE DEPARTMENT ON AGING

### LONG TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

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### HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

#### Public Hearing

Tuesday, March 12, 2013

#### Testimony of Nancy Shaffer, State Ombudsman

Good morning Senator Slossberg and Representative Abercrombie and members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Nancy Shaffer and I am the State Long Term Care Ombudsman. As you know, the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program is mandated by the Older American's Act and Connecticut General Statutes 17b-400 through 17b-406 to provide services to protect the health, safety, welfare and rights of the residents of long term care facilities. As the State Ombudsman it is my responsibility to facilitate public comment and represent the interests of residents in order to recommend changes to the laws, regulations, policies and actions which affect the resident's quality of life and care. On behalf of the 30,000 residents in Connecticut's skilled nursing facilities, residential care homes and managed residential communities, I appreciate the opportunity to testify in regards to

#### H.B. No. 6609 AN ACT CONCERNING NURSING HOME TRANSPARENCY.

The Ombudsman Program is in favor of passage of this bill. The intent of the bill is to provide state agencies and consumers greater access to information regarding the actual cost of goods and services of nursing homes as well as payments to unrelated parties of nursing home providers. Connecticut experiences multiple nursing home bankruptcies, receiverships and closures at any given time. Just yesterday Spectrum filed a request with the Bankruptcy Court to close its Ansonia home. Only two months ago the last resident was discharged from Laurel Hill, another Spectrum home which closed. The Healthbridge facilities filed for bankruptcy only a few weeks ago. Last year, when Healthbridge filed a request with the Department of Social Services to close its Wethersfield nursing home the company refused for a number of months to disclose all financial information requested of them by the Commissioner.

I understand that the providers of Connecticut may be opposed to this proposal. They may describe the requirements of the bill as burdensome and/or unnecessary. It is my responsibility to protect individuals who are making life altering decisions about their long term services and supports. Both the individual as well as the State of Connecticut deserve full information about the finances of the nursing home and its parent company. As I reported to this legislative

assembly last year, the William and Sally Tandet home in Stamford closed due to financial insolvency, largely the result of the financial misdoings of its owner. The home was owned by an individual who had already been banned from doing business in Massachusetts by that State Attorney General because of his financial abandonment of one of the state's skilled nursing facilities.

Individuals may spend down nearly all of their lifelong assets in order to pay for nursing home care. The State's Medicaid budget expenditures are at unsustainable levels. Full disclosure is in the best interest of the consumer and the State of Connecticut. The Ombudsman Program receives far too many complaints from residents and their families about care and services. I find that often those complaints are due to lack of resources whether to improve or maintain physical plants or to provide adequate and appropriate care. HB 6609 provides the State access to financial information which will enhance its oversight of these businesses, especially when nursing homes evidence problems which may be the result of resource allocations.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak in favor of HB 6609.

Respectfully,

  
Nancy Shaffer